IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for dynamic access decision information retrieval, the method comprising:

receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies ~~one or more~~ a plurality of entitlement information items for an entity and an identity of the entity;

determining ~~an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items~~ a given information provider for each one of the plurality of entitlement information items to form a plurality of information providers, wherein the plurality of information providers are determined based on the plurality of entitlement information items identified in the request that is received;

retrieving [[the]] a given entitlement information item from ~~the information provider~~ each one of the plurality of information providers, wherein the step of retrieving the given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers includes generating a retrieval client for each one of the plurality of information providers to form a plurality of retrieval clients, ~~wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider~~ wherein each one of the retrieval clients retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the plurality of information providers that it is associated with;

forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

returning the response to the application

2.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

caching the retrieved given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers in a local storage.

3.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

identifying a cached entitlement information item within the ~~one or more~~ plurality of entitlement information [[item]] items; and

retrieving the cached entitlement information item from a local storage.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the cached entitlement information is in the form of a container.

5.   (Cancelled)

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[5]] 1, wherein each one of the retrieval clients generates a protocol module to form a plurality of protocol modules, and wherein each one of the protocol modules retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with using a provider specific protocol that is compatible with the given one of the information providers.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[5]] 1, wherein the entitlement information retrieved for all of the retrieval clients is in the form of a container.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the application is an access manager that is operatively coupled to a web server that receives entity requests from the entity across a network.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the access manager includes a rules engine.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the web server to obtain a service therefrom.

11.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for dynamic access decision information retrieval, the apparatus comprising:

        receipt means for receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies one or more a plurality of entitlement information items for an entity and an identity of the entity;

        determination means for determining ~~an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items~~ a given information provider for each one of the plurality of entitlement information items to form a plurality of

information providers, wherein the plurality of information providers are determined based on the plurality of entitlement information items identified in the request that is received;

retrieval means for retrieving [[the]] a given entitlement information item from ~~the information provider~~ each one of the plurality of information providers, wherein the step of retrieving the given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers includes generating a retrieval client for each one of the plurality of information providers to form a plurality of retrieval clients, ~~wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider~~ wherein each one of the retrieval clients retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the plurality of information providers that it is associated with;

forming means for forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

returning means for returning the response to the application.

12.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising:

means for caching the retrieved given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers in a local storage.

13.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising:

means for identifying a cached entitlement information item within the ~~one or more~~ plurality of entitlement information [[item]] items; and

means for retrieving the cached entitlement information item from a local storage.

14.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the cached entitlement information is in the form of a container.

15.   (Cancelled)

16.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[15]] 11, wherein each one of the retrieval clients generates a protocol module to form a plurality of protocol modules, and wherein each one of the protocol modules retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the

information providers that it is associated with using a provider specific protocol that is compatible with the given one of the information providers.

17.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[15]] 11, wherein the entitlement information retrieved for all of the retrieval clients is in the form of a container.

18.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the application is an access manager that is operatively coupled to a web server that receives entity requests from the entity across a network.

19.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the web server to obtain a service therefrom.

20.   (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having a computer program product tangibly embodied therein, wherein the computer program product is operable in a data processing system for providing dynamic access decision information retrieval, the computer program product comprising:

        instructions for receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies ~~one or more~~ a plurality of entitlement information items for an entity and an identity of the entity;

        instructions for determining ~~an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items~~ a given information provider for each one of the plurality of entitlement information items to form a plurality of information providers, wherein the plurality of information providers are determined based on the plurality of entitlement information items identified in the request that is received;

        instructions for retrieving [[the]] a given entitlement information item from ~~the information provider~~ each one of the plurality of information providers, wherein the step of retrieving the given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers includes generating a retrieval client for each one of the plurality of information providers to form a plurality of retrieval clients, ~~wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider~~ wherein each one of the retrieval

clients retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the plurality of information providers that it is associated with;

instructions for forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

instructions for returning the response to the application.

21. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 20, further comprising:

instructions for caching the retrieved given entitlement information item from each one of the plurality of information providers in a local storage.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim ~~22, wherein the retrieval client generates a protocol module and wherein the protocol module retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider using a provider specific protocol~~ 20, wherein each one of the retrieval clients generates a protocol module to form a plurality of protocol modules, and wherein each one of the protocol modules retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with using a provider specific protocol that is compatible with the given one of the information providers.

24. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim ~~22, wherein the retrieved given entitlement information item is in the form of a container~~ 20, wherein the entitlement information retrieved for all of the retrieval clients is in the form of a container.

25. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the application to obtain a service therefrom.